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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	3
II.	Consultations between representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and representation at meetings	2–7	3
III.	Follow-up action on recommendations of the meetings between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its specialized institutions	8–24	3
	A. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	10–11	4
	B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	12–16	4
	C. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	17–19	5
	D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	20	5
	E. United Nations Environment Programme	21–23	6
	F. United Nations Industrial Development Organization	24	6
IV.	Cooperation in the field of economic and social development	25–36	6
	A. Economic Commission for Africa	25–26	6
	B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	27	7
	C. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	28	7
	D. United Nations Children's Fund	29	7
	E. United Nations Population Fund	30	7

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F.	International Fund for Agricultural Development	31	8
G.	International Labour Organization	32	8
H.	World Health Organization	33	8
I.	World Intellectual Property Organization	34	8
J.	International Civil Aviation Organization	35	8
K.	Other departments and organizations of the United Nations system	36	8

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 51/18 of 14 November 1996.

II. Consultations between representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and representation at meetings

2. On 2 October 1996, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States Members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held their annual coordination meeting at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, in particular those items of concern and interest to OIC. In response to an invitation from OIC, a senior representative from the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat attended the meeting.

3. The coordination meeting reviewed the current international situation, with particular attention to: the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Jammu and Kashmir; Afghanistan; Somalia; the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; the consequences of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; the situation pertaining to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Security Council resolutions 731 (1992) and 883 (1993); Cyprus; and Tajikistan.

4. A high-level meeting subsequently took place between senior officials of the secretariats of the two organizations on 4 October 1996. The United Nations Secretariat delegation was headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and the delegation of the OIC secretariat, by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest and ways of further strengthening cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and OIC in the political field, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/17 of 20 November 1995. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the level of cooperation attained by the two organizations and agreed to hold regular consultations with one another on issues of mutual interest.

5. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 51/18, in which the Assembly encouraged the participation of senior secretariat officials of the United Nations and the OIC in important meetings of the two Organizations, the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Mr. Adrianus Mooy, represented the Secretary-General at the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIS member countries, held at Jakarta from 9 to 13 December 1996, and at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit at Islamabad on 23 March 1997.

6. During the period under review, regular consultations were held and information was exchanged between the secretariats of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference with regard to ongoing peacemaking efforts of the two organizations, particularly in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Somalia. Periodic consultations were also held between the Head of the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan and senior officials of OIC, with a view to promoting closer coordination and cooperation in the efforts of the two organizations to bring peace to Afghanistan. OIC also participated as an observer in the United Nations-sponsored inter-Tajik talks and signed the Protocol on Guarantees that constitutes part of the final Tajikistan peace accords. Regular information has also been exchanged with regard to the efforts of the two organizations to promote peace and national reconciliation in Somalia.

7. On 2 May 1997, the Secretary-General held a meeting with the new Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, His Excellency Dr. Azeddine Laraki, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Both sides expressed particular interest in expanding cooperation between the United Nations and OIC in all areas of mutual interest and it was agreed that the two organizations would present concrete proposals in that regard.

III. Follow-up action on recommendations of the meetings between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its specialized institutions

8. The United Nations and OIC have established priority areas for cooperation and have designated the following organizations and agencies on both sides to act as focal points for follow-up action that would be required for the implementation of recommendations adopted by joint meetings of the two organizations:

Organization/agency	*Area*
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Development of science and technology
United Nations Development Programme	Technical cooperation among Islamic countries
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Assistance to refugees
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Food security and agriculture
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Education and eradication of illiteracy
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Investment mechanisms and joint ventures
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Human resources development
United Nations Environment Programme	Environment

9. Outlined below is a summary of the reports received from the United Nations organizations and agencies serving as focal points for the priority areas during the period under review.

A. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

10. During the period under review, technical assistance provided by UNCTAD to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) gained particular momentum. This was largely in relation to ongoing work in the World Trade Organization (WTO). In a joint IDB/WTO/ITC/UNCTAD meeting held at Geneva from 19 to 21 March 1997, a review was undertaken of the technical assistance which UNCTAD could provide with regard to such areas as accession to WTO, implementation of various WTO agreements and dissemination of information on WTO.

11. UNCTAD participated in IDB seminars on "Introduction to Uruguay Round Agreements" (Turkmenistan, 16-20 December 1996), "Uruguay Round Agreements" (Dakar, 8-10 January 1997) and on "Accession to the WTO and implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements" (Jeddah, 6-10 June 1997). UNCTAD also participated in OIC's Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (Istanbul, November 1996), an IDB workshop on textiles/garments exports to the European Union from IDB members, held at Amman from 2 to 5 August 1997, and an IDB workshop on supply/demand for fertilizers in IDB member countries, held in Tunisia from 6 to 9 October 1997. In addition, IDB has requested UNCTAD to submit various technical assistance proposals on various international trade issues. Bilateral consultations with the IDB were also held for an investment-related project for least developed countries that are members of OIC. It is expected that a comprehensive programme of technical assistance financed by IDB and co-executed by UNCTAD and IDB will be in place by 1997/98.

B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

12. On 5 July 1988, OIC and UNHCR signed an Agreement on Cooperation, according to which coordination between them on humanitarian issues would be enhanced. Such cooperation includes regular consultations on subjects of mutual interest and the exchange of information and documentation on the policies and activities of UNHCR and OIC, whereby the OIC participates as an observer in meetings of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme and UNHCR participates as an observer at conferences and other activities of OIC.

13. Within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement, UNHCR and OIC have continued to expand their cooperation primarily in areas relating to refugees and global humanitarian problems of common interest. Regular meetings between representatives of the two organizations both have been held at Geneva and at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Exchanges between OIC and UNHCR were further expanded in the context of the coordination meetings of OIC and the focal points of United Nations lead agencies. OIC expressed its support for the general orientation of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities in its respective countries. OIC also indicated its willingness to assist UNHCR in enhancing its cooperation with the Islamic world.

14. The participation of UNHCR in the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIS member countries, held at Jakarta from 9 to 12 December 1996, constituted a further step forward in the two organizations' common search for humanitarian solutions and adequate responses to the plight of various groups of refugees in Islamic countries. The Conference requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNHCR to expedite the preparation of a survey to ascertain the number and situation

of the refugees in the Islamic world. It recommended that OIC member States and the Islamic Development Bank should increase their support for Islamic countries hosting refugees and appealed to OIC member States to cooperate with UNHCR in assisting refugees.

15. With regard to UNHCR's cooperation with the specialized institutions of OIC, a number of concrete steps have been taken to implement the terms of the special agreement between UNHCR and the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO), signed in May 1991. The agreement provides for general and permanent cooperation between UNHCR and ISESCO, including the exchange of expertise, regular meetings of a joint commission and mutual benefits of staff services. In this connection, a joint UNHCR/ISESCO meeting was held at Rabat in November 1996 to further enhance the cooperation between both agencies. The project activities proposed by ISESCO in June 1996 were finalized. Two projects submitted by ISESCO in Morocco and Yemen will be co-funded by UNHCR.

16. Progress has also been achieved in cooperation with IDB within the framework of a Cooperation Agreement signed in January 1994. The main objective of the agreement is to enhance the cooperation between UNHCR and IDB in the field of humanitarian assistance to refugees and returnees. Consultations are conducted between the two organizations to identify projects and plans designed to assist refugees and returnees, focusing on essential needs, such as settlement, training, education, health and development. Also, within the field of promotion and dissemination of refugee law, UNHCR and OIC are exploring further opportunities to jointly organize seminars and conferences on asylum and refugee law in various Islamic countries.

C. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

17. FAO continued its cooperation with some of the specialized and affiliated institutions of OIC, particularly IDB, the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM), the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC), and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) of OIC. Cooperation between FAO and these institutions of the OIC focused on areas of common interest, such as food security, water resources conservation and management, water policy reform and training in agricultural policy analysis.

18. A delegation from IDB visited FAO headquarters in Rome in April 1997. Priority areas for possible future cooperation between FAO and IDB were identified, including: a training programme in agricultural policy analysis for the Caucasus and Central Asian republics; combating desertification; food outlook/forecasts; nutrition, food safety and consumer protection; commodities and trade; and statistics. It has also been agreed to focus collaboration on food security-related projects in the context of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security for a renewable three-year programme.

19. Cooperation between INWRDAM and FAO started in April 1996 and continued through 1996 and the first half of 1997. It has been agreed that cooperation between the two institutions could be achieved through networking, training and awareness-raising in specific technical areas focusing on water quality and management and irrigation technology. Cooperation between SESRTCIC and FAO also continued during the reporting period. The two institutions jointly organized the "Near East Regional Training Seminar on Food and Agricultural Policy Analysis", which was held at Ankara from 30 September to 11 October 1996. The seminar focused on the "Implications of Economic Policies on Food Security". ISESCO has also expressed the wish to establish cooperative relations with FAO and has proposed a cooperation agreement between the two organizations.

D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

20. UNESCO has continued its cooperation with OIC through its specialized agencies, notably ISESCO and the Research Centre for Islamic History, Arts and Culture (IRCICA). UNESCO's cooperation with ISESCO was consolidated by the signature at Sarajevo on 30 March 1996 of a Protocol of Cooperation for 1996-1997 by the Directors-General of the two organizations. The Protocol, which provides for joint activities for the biennium in the fields of education, science, culture and communications, was drawn up in joint meetings between the two secretariats. The implementation of the Protocol and activities for 1997 under the Protocol were reviewed in Rabat and Paris in January and February 1997. It was agreed that an annual joint meeting would be held in Paris in November/December 1997 to draw up joint activities for 1998-1999. In preparation for that joint meeting, the two organizations will exchange their draft programme budgets to allow for the development of

joint activities. As far as cooperation with IRCICA is concerned, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Directors-General of UNESCO and IRCICA at Istanbul on 8 June 1996, providing a framework for ongoing and future cooperation between the two organizations.

E. United Nations Environment Programme

21. A Cooperation Agreement between OIC and UNEP was signed in 1992. UNEP and ISESCO also signed a Cooperation Agreement at Rabat on 4 December 1996, which stipulated, *inter alia*, that joint programming should be encouraged, information exchange should be promoted between the two institutions and focal points should be nominated from both agencies.

22. A representative from OIC participated in the Regional Consultations on UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO) from 3 to 5 September 1996 in Bahrain, and a UNEP representative attended the seventeenth session of the Executive Council of ISESCO from 1 to 6 December 1996. It has been agreed that a joint project on the education of trainers in the field of environmental education will be jointly implemented by UNEP and ISESCO through two workshops, one for anglophone Islamic countries in Bahrain and one for francophone Islamic countries in Mauritania. Both projects are to be implemented in the second half of 1997.

23. A proposal for organizing a seminar on "Environmental Values in Islam" has been prepared by UNEP and submitted to OIC and ISESCO for joint sponsorship. Owing to the success of external fund-raising efforts, the project, which is estimated to cost $442,000, will be implemented with no financial implications to the three organizations. Outside funding totalling more than US$ 150,000 has been secured initially. The seminar is scheduled to take place in late 1997 or early 1998. It is hoped that the proceedings of the seminar will contribute to a multi-denominational, global meeting on environmental values in various regions. UNEP has also designated a focal point for cooperation with OIC and its specialized and affiliated institutions. The focal point represented UNEP at the joint United Nations/OIC meeting held at Geneva from 26 to 28 June 1996 and at the seventeenth session of the Executive Council of ISESCO.

F. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

24. A Cooperation Agreement between UNIDO and OIC was signed on 24 November 1996. The Agreement will facilitate cooperation between the two organizations in the following six areas: establishment of small-scale industries; joint industrial ventures between UNIDO and two or several States members of OIC; project identification and preparation; industrial investment promotion; development of industrial technological capabilities of Islamic countries; and technical cooperation between Islamic countries.

IV. Cooperation in the field of economic and social development

A. Economic Commission for Africa

25. Formal relations between the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the specialized agencies of OIC started in 1989 as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/8 of 18 October 1989. Since then, ECA has developed fruitful cooperative relations with OIC and its specialized agencies. As part of its ongoing relationship with OIC, ECA continued its cooperation during 1995-1996 with the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD), a subsidiary organ and specialized agency of OIC. ECA and IFSTAD jointly organized the West African Conference on Science and Technology, held at Yamoussoukro from 8 to 11 May 1996. The conference examined a draft subregional policy on science and technology and initiated a number of subregional projects.

26. ECA has also established cooperative relations with IDB, ISESCO, and the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI). The latter is developing an information system and network (OICIS-NET) complementary to ECA's system and network covering 19 African member countries of OIC. Joint efforts are also being made to coordinate activities between the two institutions. ISESCO and ECA are also exchanging information and data in the field of information/documentation management. Similar cooperation exists with SESRTCIC in exchanging publications and information. The Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT) and ECA are also studying the possibilities of cooperation in the development of trade information systems. For the implementation of the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (UNTACDA II), ECA has also held discussions with

IDB for the latter to assist in the implementation of the following three projects: (a) missing links of the trans-African highway; (b) regional integration and removal of non-physical barriers and cooperation in shipping and air transport; and (c) projects of landlocked countries, especially dry ports.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

27. During 1996, ESCWA completed the implementation of a UNEP/IDB-funded project entitled "Assessment of Water Resources in the ESCWA Region Using Remote Sensing Techniques". Another IDB-supported project is currently under way which aims at establishing a regional water training network among ESCWA member States with the objectives of providing professional and technical training to strengthen and upgrade regional capabilities to meet the water training needs of ESCWA member States and disseminating relevant information on training activities in the water sector. Furthermore, through assistance previously provided by IDB, ESCWA has been able to support the publication and dissemination of material on technology development in ESCWA member countries. SESRTCIC also participated in ESCWA's Seminar on the International Comparison Programme in the ESCWA Region, held at Amman in October 1996, and in the second session of the ESCWA Statistics Committee, held at Amman in February 1997.

C. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

28. Since 1987, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has maintained a cooperative working relationship with the OIC. UNRWA has benefitted from the ongoing support of the OIC in its efforts to provide essential services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Cooperation between UNRWA and the OIC is reinforced by regular meetings between representatives of the two organizations, including with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. The Agency maintains contact with the OIC secretariat and with the Islamic Development Bank by regularly providing information on Agency activities.

D. United Nations Children's Fund

29. Cooperation between UNICEF and OIC is well into its third decade. During 1996-1997, such cooperation took the form of advocacy for accelerated pursuit of the goals set by the World Summit for Children in 1990 and identification of projects to be executed jointly with ISESCO. High-level advocacy for the goals of the World Summit for Children took place during the twenty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held at Jakarta from 9 to 14 December 1996. In addition to reaffirming its commitment to the welfare of children in OIC member States by endorsing the Jeddah Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam, the conference also mandated two specific activities: the convening of a Ministerial-level Conference on the Child and Social Affairs and the conduct of a mid-decade review of progress towards achievement of the goals for the year 2000. One notable achievement in the area of advocacy is the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all OIC member States except one. A new chapter in cooperation was opened on 22 October 1996 when UNICEF and ISESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the areas of education for girls, environmental and health education, psychosocial rehabilitation, peace education and promotion of awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

E. United Nations Population Fund

30. UNFPA has continued to support the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. A regional project was formulated to incorporate population concepts within Islamic education, to be funded jointly with ISESCO. The project also aims to enhance the capacity of theologians and Islamic education officials of ISESCO member States to interpret population issues (including reproductive health and the gender dimension) from an Islamic perspective. UNFPA's assistance centres on technical advisory services and on the education of trainers. ISESCO and the IICPSR have also established coordination in the process of project formulation, which led to the signing in October 1996 of a joint Cooperation Agreement between UNFPA and ISESCO. Among the activities of the project were an expert group meeting of Islamic specialists in population education hosted by IICPSR and convened for the purpose of defining a framework for integrating population education concepts into Islamic education, and preparations for a Symposium on Muslim Women's Education, held at Al-Azhar in June 1997.

F. International Fund for Agricultural Development

31. During the period under review, IFAD expanded its collaboration with OIC agencies, notably IDB and ISESCO. With regard to IFAD's cooperation with IDB, it has been agreed that annual meetings should be held between senior staff of the two institutions in order to ensure better information flows and communication. The President of IFAD visited IDB in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in November 1996 and discussed with the President of the Bank increased co-financing and the need to focus cooperation in the newly independent countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, a high-level delegation from IDB visited IFAD headquarters in Rome in April 1997 and explored the modalities for future cooperation with regard to potential projects that could be undertaken jointly by the two institutions. The two sides also exchanged information and documents on potential projects for co-financing, as well as work programmes pertaining specifically to the sub-Saharan region. As regards cooperation with ISESCO, IFAD co-sponsored a seminar on irrigation management and legislation held at Bamako in May 1997.

G. International Labour Organization

32. ILO continues to attach great importance to strengthening relations and cooperation with OIC through the execution of joint activities and exchange of information on a wide range of issues of common interest, including employment promotion and poverty alleviation, private sector development, women workers questions, vocational training, vocational rehabilitation and occupational safety and health. Among the organizations and institutions of OIC, contacts were maintained with IDB, ISESCO and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry, mainly to exchange information on the issues in the fields of the ILO's technical competence. Possibilities for joint activities were also explored.

H. World Health Organization

33. During the reporting period, WHO continued its cooperation with the OIC and its specialized institution, ISESCO. In April 1996, WHO and ISESCO signed an agreement for the implementation of joint programmes on health education and rehabilitation of the handicapped. WHO/ISESCO cooperation covered several areas, such as health education, promotion of environmental health and healthy cities programmes, and the promotion of the role of women in adult education. The two organizations continued their cooperation to promote the use of an Action-Oriented School Health Curriculum among various member States. This approach has attracted the attention and interest of several countries worldwide. WHO is also cooperating with the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences and ISESCO in conducting several seminars on Islam and health. The following are some of the activities that have been jointly organized with ISESCO: a National Training Workshop on Rehabilitation in Palestine; a symposium held at Cairo on "Islam and Public Health"; an inter-country meeting on methods and techniques of health education for women working in the field of adult education; and an inter-country workshop on environmental education in Kuwait.

I. World Intellectual Property Organization

34. WIPO and OIC have been cooperating within the framework of a 1992 Agreement concerning the following priority areas: development of human resources; use of patent information and documentation; and the reinforcement of intellectual property infrastructure. WIPO officials met with the new Secretary-General of OIC at Geneva in early 1997 and discussed ways and means of strengthening cooperation to enhance the protection of intellectual property rights in OIC member States and improve the usefulness and the contribution of the intellectual property system to the economic development of OIC member States. It was agreed that the matter should be further discussed at OIC headquarters in Jeddah later in the year.

J. International Civil Aviation Organization

35. ICAO has concluded a Cooperation Agreement with the Islamic Development Bank and plans to develop and implement projects under the agreement.

K. Other departments and organizations of the United Nations system

36. The Department of Public Information and the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World

Food Programme (WFP) conveyed information to the United Nations Secretariat on their programmes and activities in OIC member States during the year.